1	2	3	4	5	6-
Pulses	231.97	231.92	223.91	0.05	8.06
Sugarcane	4927	51.51	42.02	-224	725
Cotton	95.60	91.45	86.77	4.15	8.83

(d) As per the 2nd Advance Estimates of Production released on 7th February, 2008, production of paddy, oilseeds, pulses and cotton are higher during 2007-08 as compared to 2006-07 whereas production of wheat and sugarcane are lower. Government imported 6.08 million tonnes of wheat to augment the buffer stock during 2006-07.

Prevention of bird flu

807. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is **a** fact that main causes for spread of bird flu in West Bengal and other States could not be located well in time by the Central Government;

(b) if so, the total number of hens, cocks and chickens lost their lives due to this disease;

(c) whether this bird flu is only for the poultry and no other birds suffer this disease; and

(d) what preventive steps taken/being taken by Central Government to prevent such diseases in future which may also harm human being?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) No, Sir. However, the present occurrence of bird flu is limited only to West Bengal and has not been reported from any other State in the country.

(b) A total of 40 lakh poultry birds have been culled up to 03.032008 in West Bengal as part of the control and containment operations against bird flu in the State. Further, another 3.03 lakh poultry birds have been culled as part of preventive culling undertaken in the border areas of Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand and West Bengal.

(c) Bird flu can, in addition to poultry, also affect wild/migratory birds.

(d) The Government of India has drawn up an 'Action Plan of Animal Husbandry for Preparednes, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza' and circulated the same to all States/Union Territories for compliance. The preventive steps against future occurrence of such diseases include maintaining strict surveillance, prompt reporting of any unusual mortality of livestock and birds,drawing regular samples, capacity building in laboratory diagnostic facilities, strengthening of animal quarantine stations and creating overall awareness on bio-security in livestock production system.

Ban on the sale of agricultural land

808. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken a final decision to ban on the sale of agricultural land in the country for setting up of industries thereon;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when it is expected to be implemented and if not, the reasons for reducing the agricultural land rapidly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) No, Sir. As per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, land is

a State subject; therefore, it is for the respective State Government to bring suitable legislation for prevention of sale of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes including setting up of Industries. However, with a view to lay down broad guidelines and policy recommendations on agrarian relations and land reforms, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Development, has set up a National Council for Land Reforms under the chairmanship of Prime Minister of India. The other members of the council include Union Ministers of Rural Development, Agriculture, Environment and Forests, Panchayati Raj, Tribal Affairs, Social Justice and Empowerment, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, other distinguished members and Secretary, Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development as Member Secretary.

As per available estimates, total cultivable land was 185.09 million ha. in 1980-81 which has reduced to 182.57 million ha. in 2005-06 in the country. During the same period, land under non-agricultural uses has increased from 19.66 million ha. to 24.94 million ha., resulting in marginal decline in the extent of cultivable land. This reduction in cultivable land is mainly due to diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes such as urbanization, roads, industries etc.

National Policy on Farmers 2007

809. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
PROF. ALKABALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government is aware that the conditions of farmers in the country is deteriorating day by day and suicides by farmers are increasing;

(b)if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c)whether Government has since taken any steps to implement the National Policy on Farmers 2007 in letter and spirit to prevent suicides by farmers; and

(d)if so, the further reaction of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Agriculture contributes nearly 18% of India's GDP with about 60% of the country's population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The progress in agriculture has enabled the country to achieve food security. However, the agricultural growth during the Ninth Plan and first three years of the Tenth Plan was below the targeted growth of 4% per annum due to various reasons leading to rural distress in certain parts of the country. A Statement indicating number of suicides by farmers during the last few years, as reported by the State Governments is enclosed *(see* below). The State Governments have broadly reported crop failure, indebtedness, drought, social and economic insecurity as causes for committing suicide by farmers.

(c) and (d) Based on the Revised Draft National Policy for Farmers submitted by the National Commission on Farmers, the Government has approved the National Policy for Farmers, 2007. Various recommendations made by the Commission for rejuvenation of agriculture and allied sectors, as accepted by the Government, have been incorporated in the National Policy for Farmers. These include, *inter alia,* asset reforms in respect of land, water, livestock, fisheries and bio-resources; support services and inputs like application of frontier technologies for improving productivity in a sustainable manner; agricultural bio-security system; supply of good quality seeds and disease-free planting material; issue of soil health passbooks to the farmers and integrated nutrient and pest management system, etc.